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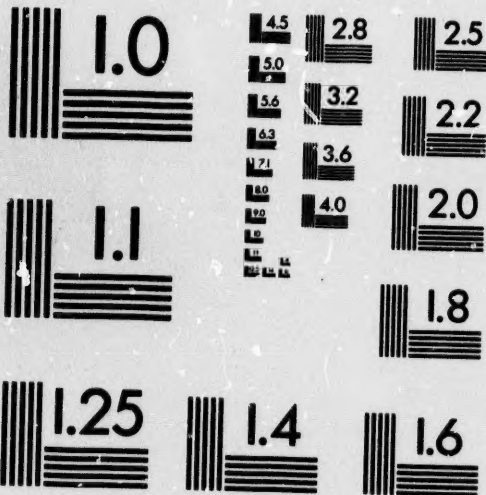
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(B78)
Address to Young Men,

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IN THE

Young Men's Christian Association,

ST. JOHN, N. B.,

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, NOV. 5, 1893,

BY

REV. G. BRUCE, B. A.

“PROGRESS” PRINT, ST. JOHN, N. B.

ONE of the greatest hindrances to good advice offered to young men is the oft-repeated declaration, "There is plenty of time," "I can stop when I please." Men do not seem to realize that, even if this were true, "Turning over a new leaf" in the ledger does not blot out the bad entry, nor does ceasing to "sow wild oats" prevent God's law from being carried out. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There will be a harvest after every sowing. But the saying, "I can stop when I please," is as if a man should say, "I shall go on in my wrong course till I find I am not able to stop it."—Surely this is not the saying of a wise man! You all know about the Niagara River. I lived near it for a number of years. Almost every summer the people there are horrified by the report that a man has gone over the falls; sometimes this takes place from the carelessness of men who have become

familiar with crossing the river some distance above the falls. Strong, expert boatmen they are, who find it possible, generally, to pull through the current and into the quieter waters. So long, so often, as the man can do this his life is safe, of course, but it sometimes happens that familiarity with the placid and seemingly harmless ripple leads to over-confidence, and the man is thrilled with horror to find that his boat is beyond his control. The supreme effort only holds him stationary for a few moments in the deadly current. The vaunting declaration, "I can easily pull out of it" is now changed, once for all, in a moment, into the awful conviction "It is too late; I cannot pull out of it; the current is too strong for me! A few more efforts and my strength will give out,—the river never grows tired!"

Young men, when you cannot stop it will be too late. Keep out of the deadly current or pull out of it, if you are in it, now! Do not drift easily upon the foam-flecked rapids—when you cannot stop it will be all over with you and your smiling indiffer-

ence will be turned into the struggles of despair.

My subject this afternoon has been given to me, "printed traps" and it is my purpose in the few words I shall speak to you to reveal these snares and to warn you against them while revelation or warning may still be of value to you.

And first let me say a few words about traps in general. Traps are instruments used to catch living things, with the intention of depriving them of their life or their liberty.

Trappers are sharp-eyed, keen, resourceful men, who know more about the habits of their victims than a professional naturalist.

Satan, the old trapper of men, has studied his prey for many a century. Indeed he seems to have been acquainted with our nature from the beginning. And with wonderful persistency through his agents he is following up his victims with a terrible success. Once he failed;—when he met the Son of God in the wilderness.

Traps may be classed under two heads; *concealed* traps and *baited* traps; *concealed*

traps are placed where the victims are likely to fall into them unsuspectingly. Baited traps are usually concealed as well, but their danger lies chiefly in the attractive bait—the fur trapper understands the food that will attract his victim, the angler knows well the kind of fly to use for the fish he is after. And we may be sure one so skilled in the capture of souls as our great enemy, understands well what temptation to use in order to allure men and get them into his power.

Young men! The danger lies within yourselves, in your nature and your habits. If the way of danger is avoided, the snare or the pitfall will not be for you. If the appetite or the desire be watched with prayerful interest, the bait will not allure you into the trapper's power. The hook will float harmlessly beside you in the stream. One thing must be remembered: *It was God and not Satan who made you,* and he who gave you your being is able to guide you in the safe and lawful and pure use of these faculties which he has planted within you.

Printed Traps.

And now as to our special theme, printed traps.

When printing was discovered in Europe (it was known centuries before in China and Japan.) When Gutenberg and Faust revealed the use of types there was put into the hand of man the most potent instrument that has ever been discovered.

The printing press, however, does not create except indirectly. Its function and glory are in its limitless power in multiplying or sowing the thoughts of men.

And the good it has done and is doing in this is beyond all computation.

To take an example of its highest use, the Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society for the past year tells of the work of that society alone in the printing of God's word in 313 languages and dialects, and the issue of over four millions of copies or portions of the word of God. This in a single year. Does not this suggest to us the river of Ezekiel's vision, which issuing from the Temple increased in volume till it became a river that could not be crossed

over? What a mighty stream of the water of life is here, which has increased through the agency of printing year by year until it has reached its present magnitude! Or to change the simile. Are we not reminded of the words in Revelation, "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations," as we see in fancy the ceaseless outgoing of the printed pages falling steadily, silently, like the snowflakes on a Christmas eve. and not merely to hide the dark, cold world, put to purify and heal its sins and its sorrows

And from this the multiplying of the copies of God's thoughts we see the multiplying of the thoughts of men and women, suggested, stimulated, born of God's thoughts disseminated among men. Sent forth in every form—in book and magazine and newspaper, day and night, over the world.

The Dark Side.

But—the dark side of this magnificent development is at hand. Satan has not failed to see and to appreciate the significance of all this. He has laid his hand

upon the press. He has appealed to the greed and lust of its managers. He has revealed to them the money and power which is within the grasp of him who will use this mighty instrument to appeal to the passions and the secret lust and vices of men.

And, through his agents, he is causing this beneficent invention to become the instrument of incalculable evil by the diffusion of mental and moral poison.

It is especially in this region; within the dark shadow and silence of this deadly influence that the traps are opened for the destruction of men. In silence and in secret they are hidden in the printed page. Alluringly and temptingly they are baited with appeals to the passions of the human heart. Like Cleopatra's asp, they are conveyed in a basket of fruit or flowers, and enter silently into the home, the bed-chamber, the midnight thoughts of the unwary victim, with their deadly poison.

These traps may be conveniently classed in a general way under two heads:

Infidelity and Immorality.

Or those directed against our faith and

those which are intended to destroy morality or the practice of a pure life.

Traps of Infidelity.

Of the first, I shall only say a word or two. The chief danger today is not so much from the metaphysical and avowed infidelity of writers like Hume, or even Voltaire or Paine, as from the infused and diluted agnosticism which permeates so much of the literature from the pens of clever but superficial writers, who masquerade in the worn out and cast off clothes of the giants of inductive science.

The insinuations and covert sneers made and scattered broadcast by these creatures against the Word of God, the church of Christ and the preaching of the Gospel would be unworthy of notice, but from the fact that so many of those who are unable to detect their falseness and superficiality are captured by them.

I would challenge any man to tell me of a single church in this city in which the doctrines so much spoken and written against as belonging to religion are preached or believed; one where any attempt is

made to deprive men of their freedom of thought ; where their personal responsibility to God is denied ; any one in which men are fettered in the chains of a creed or are told that salvation in Christ is not freely and blessedly communicated through the faith of the Son of God.

Surely the cause is weak which builds its walls on a false foundation. Let us know in plain fact the church or minister or christian who holds any such narrow or unchristlike doctrine.

Traps of Impure Literature.

And now a word about the traps of impure literature. Perhaps you do not know that tons of obscene printed matter of a character held to be as contraband and injurious as would be the entrance of a plague stricken ship, are issued from the press every year. Pages calculated with a devilish ingenuity to kindle the impure passions of the human heart. Suppose a cup of sparkling water were presented to you when you were thirsty by some fair hand accompanied with a bewitching smile, what would be your feelings after you had

drunk it if you were told "You had drunk water from the drainage of a leprous hospital?" That, if it were possible, you had drunk into your blood the seed of inevitable death, of death in its most awful and loathsome form! Well, God *who knows what sin is*, wrote it in the language of leprosy in the body where men could see it and know its hideousness. Moral impurity though clothed in fine garments and bedecked with jewels is, in the soul, what leprosy is in the body—foul, incurable by human skill—horrible, deadly. So God has written it, and the *seed* of this soul leprosy is in the pages of the literature which is being scattered in countless numbers over the land.

Remember! God has given you in your very being faculties in the possession and proper use of which lie the possibility of the tenderest and the strongest impulses of your life. Impulses of tremendous potency. Impulses which lead to the foundation of home, to unselfish devotion, to limitless, almost infinite energy—impulses without which you would not be what you

are in character or strength. And herein in the very completeness of your nature lies the possibility of your misery and destruction. As Bunyan puts it, an opening to the place of woe beside the very gate of heaven. The glory and crown of your manhood your strength turned into the instrument of your slavery and debasement. Young man! Let me counsel you, avoid the very appearance of this evil as you would contact with the most loathesome disease! But some one will say, "You bind me" you appeal to fear. A young man cannot be held in bondage. He must be free. He must not be afraid" A true man is not free to do what is unmanly. An honourable man will say "I hold myself incapable of doing what is wrong." I am not free to steal or to lie or to do murder." Let it be so here. Say "with the help of Him who is able to keep you from falling, your Friend and Redeemer, How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God."

